

VZCZCXRO5443
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHLU #0535/01 1940332
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 120332Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4883
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LUANDA 000535

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: MPLA, UNITA OPT FOR FRESH FACES IN SELECTING
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATES

REF: LUANDA 0471

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Based on the preponderance of new faces on candidate lists submitted by the ruling MPLA and main opposition party UNITA, National Assembly's membership will change radically following the September 5 legislative election. In addition, the political field narrowed dramatically when only 10 coalitions and 24 of the 98 legal political parties submitted candidate lists for Constitutional Court review by the July 7 deadline. The Court will further winnow the number of coalition/parties as it assesses the documents submitted by these entities. END SUMMARY

Fresh Faces on MPLA, UNITA Parliamentary Benches

2. (U) The candidate lists presented by the MPLA and UNITA make clear that the Assembly that emerges from the September 5 elections will be mostly new faces. The MPLA's list of 355 candidates includes only 39 members of the current National Assembly. This doesn't signify a lack of star power - President dos Santos leads a list that includes the majority of the GRA's MPLA-based ministers and governors, several famous artists and athletes, and one of his daughters. Most ministers and governors (and naturally dos Santos himself) are not expected to take seats in parliament; rather, their inclusion brings name recognition and underlines the MPLA's core message of "stick with the team that brought you peace, stability and post-war reconstruction." Candidates were selected in closed-door sessions of the party's senior leaders, but insiders state that Dos Santos had the final say and tweaked the list until the last minute.

3. (U) UNITA's candidate list is also full of new faces; only 20 percent of current deputies remain. As expected, the "dirty 16" of UNITA deputies who split from the party yet remained in parliament are off the list; added are representatives from civil society, journalists and other independent candidates brought in to underscore UNITA's campaign strategy of folding diverse opposition elements under the UNITA umbrella rather than working out coalitions that allow other parties to keep their identity. In deliberate contrast to the closed-door MPLA selection process, the majority of UNITA's candidates were chosen by votes from attendees at party conferences held in each of the 18 provinces.

D-Day for FNLA and PADEPA, Close Call for PRS

4. (U) Discarding all attempts at mediation or reconciliation, both wings of the FNLA (currently the fourth largest party in parliament), submitted candidate lists in the names of their respective party presidents. Yet to be seen is whether the Court will rule one or both factions ineligible. While the FNLA's fissure was well known in advance of elections (reftel), Democratic Support and Progress Party (PADEPA) leaders received a shock when an

expelled party member submitted an alternate list of candidates mere hours before the deadline. As there is no pending legal action challenging the party's elected leaders, PADEPA President Carlos Leitao is hopeful the Court will discard the alternate list.

¶5. (U) The leadership battles at PRS, however, appeared to be settled when the faction headed by Antonio Muachicungo was unable to garner enough signatures to present a candidate list. In the waning hours before the deadline Muachicungo announced a coalition with the Democratic Party for Social Progress. PRS President Eduardo Kuangana is hopeful that this defection will allow the Court to settle the pending legal action in which Muachicungo challenged Kuangana's election as party president.

Cutting the Fat

¶6. (U) In a dramatic narrowing of the political field of 98 legal political parties, only 24 political parties and 10 coalitions of small parties presented lists of candidates to the Constitutional Court by the July 7th deadline. The winnowing is not yet complete; the court must now scrutinize the supporting documentation submitted with each party's list to determine which parties and coalitions fulfilled the legal requirements to participate in September's race, namely the gathering of a minimum of 14,000 legal signatures for each party. The Court plans to complete its evaluation by July 17; parties that do not make the grade will then have two days to provide additional documentation or be cut from the final list of parties eligible to compete in the elections.

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¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: 98 political parties are too many for the Angolan political landscape, and the ongoing election process is providing a much-needed separation of the wheat from the chaff. We anticipate at most 15 parties - and perhaps as few as 8 - and three coalitions will remain standing after the Court rules on who has met the legal requirements to run. Regardless, MPLA and UNITA remain the big kids on the block, and their bringing new blood into the National Assembly is the first step towards revitalizing a historically lackluster institution. END COMMENT
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